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ON THE FALSE PROPHETS

OF THE

LAST DAYS.

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If we take a retrospective view of God's dealings with the children of men, and look back to the morn of creation, and from thence downwards through the flight of ages, we find continued instances of the condescension of God in manifesting himself unto his fallen creatures, in humbling himself to hold converse with them, in order that he might communicate blessings and give them laws and precepts, by the guidance of which they might be restored to his favour and become sons of God. On the other hand, we have also continued proofs of the direful consequences of sin, in the proneness of man to evil and rebellion against his Maker, notwithstanding the glorious and repeated exhibitions of the power and the love of God. And it was only when the children of men had perverted the ways of the Lord, had ceased to regard his precepts, and in the pride of their own hearts preferred the teachings of men to the laws of heaven, that he withdrew himself from them, and caused his Spirit no longer to strive with them.

The authority of the Holy Priesthood after the order of the Son of God was then "caught up to God and to his throne," so that the "sun went down over the prophets, and the day became dark over them, so that they had no vision, and it was night unto them."

Thus do we find the people after the days of Malachi, having no vision or revelation from the Lord God, but left to the pride of their own understandings, dividing themselves into sects, and in their blindness preferring the writings of their uninspired elders to the laws of God communicated through his servant Moses.

When, behold, the whole host of deceivers and deceived are startled from their formal propriety, and awakened to holy wrath and pious indignation, against a presuming and contemptible Nazarene that has started up from obscurity, and come forth amongst the people teaching doctrines in opposition to the acknowledged and received faith and practice of the varied sects of the Jews—doctrines simple, beautiful, clothed with the light and power of truth, and possessing an irresistible energy to pluck off the specious garb, that alike covered the proud Pharisee or the self-opinionated Sadducee.

But might not one with apparent justice inquire, did not the learned and the pious of the people acknowledge the truth and the force of those doctrines, especially when they were accompanied by manifestations of divine energy, and the sincerity of the teacher was established by continued acts of benevolence, conferring blessings on all around him? Let history tell the fearful tale, and with the voice of thunder cause the answer to reverberate in the ears of every self-righteous Pharisee of modern times.

Alas! alas! instead of acknowledging the authority of him who spake as never man spake—instead of recognizing the Holy One and the Just, and becoming subject to his mild and peaceful yoke, in the garb of holy sanctity and with a profession of zeal for God, they persecuted to the death the Lord of life and glory, and wagged their heads with a demoniacal exultation as he hung upon the tree, while heaven stood abashed and all nature groaned beneath the dread catastrophe!

But had the powers of darkness triumphed? It is true, the Lord of life lay prostrate, the sepulchre of death owned him its inmate, and the arm that had of late been clothed with omnipotent energy now lay nerveless in the tomb, but not to tarry. The grave had lost its power, and could not hold him—death had lost his victory, for he burst his chains, and soaring with immortal might, ascended to the throne of God, leading captivity captive, and testifying of his risen majesty by dispensing gifts to men.

And now, behold the wisdom and the power of God manifested in the results of his transcendent triumph. While the Jewish Sanhedrim were propagating the pitiable falsehood, that the disciples of Jesus stole the body of their Lord while a Roman guard lay slumbering! there stood the followers of the Nazarene, the humble fishermen of Galilee, before the assembled multitude that thronged the feast of Pentecost; and having received the promise of the father, elevated the standard of the cross, and made proclamation with divine authority that he whom they had crucified was the anointed one of God, both Lord and Christ. And what followed? Many received their testimony, and becoming obedient to the laws of the kingdom of God then established, received the witness of the Spirit for themselves, by which they knew that the doctrine was of God.

Behold, then, the results of the mighty events that had so lately transpired, and you will contemplate a people holding intercourse with heaven, and receiving as direct communications from thence—gifts of wisdom, of knowledge, of faith, of healings, of miracles, of prophecy, of discerning of Spirits, of speaking in tongues and of the interpretation thereof; yea, more than this, you behold a people receiving instruction from the source of all intelligence, by dream, by vision, by revelation, and by the ministration of angels; yea, we contemplate a society of men and women that had, as it were, severed the link that held them to the earth, and having been born by the great law of adoption into the family of heaven, had become children of the highest, heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ; a people that knew their claim to these high privileges was legal, because they had received the seal of their citizenship—the Spirit of adoption—whereby they were enabled to cry “Abba, Father.”

But, again might we inquire, did not these principles become universal, and mankind generally become subject to the laws of God? It is true the doctrine of the cross went forth unto the nations accompanied by the power of the spirit, but its effect upon the multitude was a proof of the iniquity of man, by the violence and persecution inflicted upon those who brought its peaceful tidings. But more than this—very soon did the church itself become corrupted, and like their fathers before them, they broke the covenant of God, by ceasing to teach what he had commanded, and substituting in the stead thereof the commandments of men. The consequence of which has been that the authority and power given to the first church has again been taken from the earth, the prophets and the rulers, and the seers hath he covered, and the vision of all hath become as the words of a book that is sealed.

Thus hath it been for ages, the falling away hath come, the church has

been in the wilderness, neither keeping the commandments of God nor possessing the testimony of Jesus which is the spirit of prophecy. When lo! the time mentioned by the prophet Daniel that the God of heaven should set up a kingdom that should *never* have an end being come—the period that the preparatory work for the ushering in of the “dispensation of the fulness of times” having arrived, the Lord God of heaven again stoops to earth to hold intercourse with the sons of men, again communicates his power and authority, ordaining men to go forth unto the nations to bear testimony that the hour of his judgments is at hand—that the great Babylon of religions, that has been substituted for the religion of Jesus, is about to be destroyed, and that the great and consuming work, the restitution of all things is fast approaching; and how is it received? The ears of the people are closed to the principles of eternal truth, the finger of scorn is raised against the followers of Jesus; and more than this, the blood of its first converts hath flowed to seal their testimony, and hath ascended on high to unite in the pleadings of the spirits beneath the altar, that the Lord God would avenge their blood on them that dwell on the earth.

Yea, we behold the religionists of the present day farther even from the truth than the Jewish people in the days of Jesus—divided into a far greater multitude of sects, and equally as averse to the principles of truth, and as fully disposed to persecute those who are sent forth to propagate them. And, like the Pharisees and the doctors of the law, they are agitated at the presumption of men of obscure origin and illiterate, coming forth in these days teaching principles, which if true, are an utter condemnation of every craft and creed in Christendom; and like the enemies of the truth of old, their mutual bickerings must be laid aside to make common cause against the grand enemy of sectarianism; for something must be done to stop the progress of these bold blasphemers, as they term the Saints of the Lord, and with a profession of holy zeal for the honour of God, they join in one universal cry, that the Saints are the false prophets, that should come in the last days deceiving the people, and they bid the people beware, for they will if possible deceive the very elect.

It is our purpose after so long an introduction, to make some remarks on those passages of the New Testament, so often quoted against us, and to see to whom they really apply, and whose character they depict, so that our brethren may be enabled to turn the weapons employed against us, and make them bear upon those whom they justly describe.

And the first reference to which I would direct your attention, will be found in the second chapter of the second epistle to the Thessalonians. Here we find it foretold that a falling away must come, and that the man of sin be revealed the son of perdition. The different denominations of protestants have been long united in opinion that this allusion describes the Church of Rome, elevated in St. Peter's chair, and professing to hold the keys of the kingdom, and sitting as God in the temple of God, ministering salvation or condemnation with an authority infallible. But a cessation of hostilities can even take place with such bitter foes, in order that the weapons used against his holiness the Pope may be made to bear upon the people of God; hence, we have heard a portion of the passages alluded to, taken by a reverend divine, in a splendid chapel, and before a numerous congregation, as a motto or text upon which to found a discourse, to prove that we were the people upon whom the Lord God had sent “strong delusion, that they should believe a lie—that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” Certainly this was a fearful charge to make against a people whom he

knew not; for he, and such as he, will be the last persons to come forth candidly and honestly to investigate the principles of the church of Jesus Christ. They have too much at stake; for it is no trifling step to be taken, for a man for conscience sake to come down from affluence, from rank and popularity, to become a follower of the Nazarene in these days, and to go forth without purse and scrip, in the face of unrelenting persecution and contempt. But did he attempt to prove that the Saints believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness? I trow not. No, brethren, the outpouring of the spirit of truth in these last days, has given us too glorious a vision of the great purposes of God in man's salvation—has opened too clearly to our understandings the sublime intentions of Deity towards our race, for us to love iniquity or have pleasure in unrighteousness. How shall we, believing that through faith and obedience to the great law of adoption into the family of heaven, we have become sons of God, indulge in sin! But, on the contrary, we have learned that having entered into so high and glorious a connexion, and having the hope of eternal life, we must purify ourselves as he is pure.

Had that blind leader of the blind read in the same chapter, he would have found a description of our hopes and principles—even that we were called by St. Paul's gospel to the hope of obtaining the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that we were ready to "stand fast and hold the traditions that had been taught by the Apostle Paul," and to acknowledge that when he exhorted the churches to covet to prophecy, and forbid not to speak in tongues, that he uttered the commandments of the Lord.

But what is the great lie which the strong delusion of the people has enabled them to believe, because they love not the truth? We answer, as at the head of all the rest, the "Spaulding Fable," which has been sent forth unto the nations, that the simple and sublime principles of the gospel contained in the Book of Mormon—the fulness of the gospel—might not win its way. But no; when God shall work, whose hand shall stay him? And the stone cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll on with omnipotent power and increasing magnitude, until it fill the whole earth.

But, secondly, we find in Paul's first epistle to Timothy, and the fourth chapter, a reference to some, who, in the latter times should depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, &c. I shall not enlarge on the foregoing, as even our enemies must allow that the peculiarities above alluded to form no part of our system; neither shall I attempt at present to make the quotation apply to others, but let it suffice to say, it can have no possible allusion to the Saints; and shall pass on to the third chapter of the second epistle to Timothy. Here we find a statement that in the last days perilous times should come, and a description of the character of the people in their mutual relationship to each other, and with regard to them religiously, that they should have a form of godliness and deny the power.

I need not say how accurately is described the character of the present times, and of the people; but proceed to inquire whether the people, having a form of godliness and denying the power, be the Latter-day Saints.

But first let me ask the question,—What is the power of godliness? I answer, that Divine energy of the Spirit of the Lord God, communicated to the children of men, according to their faith, by which an Enoch, scorning as it were the claims of mortality, could ascend into the pre-

sence of Deity, being translated without seeing death; that power by which the ancient saints "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens; by which women received their dead raised to life again, and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection;" by which the apostles went forth on the day of Pentecost speaking the languages of fourteen different nations, and proclaiming in their own tongues the wonderful works of God. By the power of godliness we understand the spirit of the Lord manifesting itself in the various tokens which Jesus declared should follow them that believe. To whom, then, does the passage referred to apply? To the saints, who come forth unto the people declaring the simple principles of the gospel of the kingdom, and who bear witness that Jesus is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever, and that the signs which he promised do, and shall follow them that believe? Nay, but to the followers of the systems of men who deny the power, who boast that the auxiliary of the spirit of the Lord God is useless, and unblushingly declare that to be in possession of the blessings of the spirit like the first churches, would be to fall from their high elevation, and that to return to primitive Christianity would be to retrograde.

Oh! I must blush for humanity, and hide my head in shame for my kindred, when I behold them in their wilful blindness declare that religion in these days has attained an elevation of which a Paul or a Peter were unconscious—that its principles are more widely disseminated and better understood than at any other period of time. This is emphatically calling light darkness, and darkness light. For a man to declare that now, when the heavens have been shut up for ages, when the voice of Deity has been hushed, when his spirit has ceased to communicate instruction by gifts, by dreams or by visions, when those glorious intelligences, the angels of God, have ceased to administer to the sons of men, that we have more light, more knowledge, more glory!

Oh, my soul, come not thou into their secret; banish far from me, O God, this dark delusion, and let me for thy Son's sake drink at the fountain of all intelligence and truth; bless me with thy spirit as thou didst thy servants in days that are past; enable me to come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to thyself, the judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant. Yea, give unto me of thy spirit, that I may search all things, even the deep things of God. Let me have that unction from the Holy One by which I shall know all things, and be prepared to realize the fulfilment of the prayer of my Lord, that I may be one with the Father and with the Son, even as they are one. I ask it in the name of Jesus. Amen.

The passage to which we would next direct the attention of our readers will be found in the second chapter of the second epistle of Peter. "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them," &c.

Here we would remark that our ears are often assailed with the cry of "false prophets," "false teachers," "damnable heresies," &c, but no attempt is made to establish the whole passage against us, by a reference

to the damnable heresy which should characterize these false prophets in the last times, namely, "denying the Lord that bought them." No, brethren, our enemies being judges, they know well that we are not disposed to deny our glorious Lord, therefore they pass over this part of the subject in silence, knowing that the investigation of it would establish the fact that we are so zealous of the honour of our Saviour and of the teachings of his spirit, that we willingly cast away from us all the commentaries of men as so many vain attempts "to paint the lily, or to gild refined gold," that we come forth to proclaim the gospel which he commanded his first servants to declare, and for which he has given his spirit again unto the sons of men, that with power and authority they might propagate the same principles of eternal truth, and thereby gather from the ends of the earth a glorious remnant to meet him at his coming.

Who then are they that deny the Lord that bought them? Are they not those who profess to be his followers, yet refuse to obey him? That are teaching "the fear of God, by the precepts of men?" For he that saith "he knoweth him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

Who then, again I ask, are they that deny the Lord that bought them? They who "have transgressed his laws, changed his ordinances, and broken his covenant?" or they that come to teach his laws without the note or the comment of any school of divines,—that come to establish his ordinance, and to proclaim again to the nations, "baptism for remission of sins," as the great law of adoption into his kingdom, in order that they may receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and realize for themselves that the everlasting covenant hath been renewed, to prepare the way for the great restitution of all things, when God, "shall gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and in the earth, even in him?" No, my brethren, we will not deny our glorious Lord, who hath bought us with his blood; but may he grant unto us of his Spirit, that we may be filled with the same principle of love, and be ready to lay down our lives for each other.

But again, in the third chapter of the same epistle, we are told that "in the last days there shall come scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." Here then is a reference to false teachers of the last days, which the infatuation of the bitterest enemy of the truth can never make applicable to us. For what is our mission? and what profession do we make, but that we are come to fulfil the message of the Angel of the Lord spoken of by the revelator John, whom he saw "flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the *hour of his judgment is come*, and worship him that made heaven and earth, and the seas and the fountains of waters." This is indeed our purpose, to declare that the day of the Lord will come upon the earth, and that speedily, as a thief in the night, and that many now living shall witness the final accomplishment of these things, being either consumed by the fury of his coming, (which shall burn as an oven) or be associated with that distinguished remnant that shall be found in the midst of the earth, who shall lift up their voice, and shall sing for the majesty of the Lord.

But have we any difficulty in pointing to the parties foretold in the passage, who deny the coming of the Lord, or who have so spiritualized

every thing connected with the kingdom of God that the plainest declarations of holy writ are become obscured, and the people are so blinded as liberally to support a race of hireling priests to convince them that the Scriptures do not mean what they say. But we warn them, as those that are sent of God, to awake from their slumber, and to be assured that the Lord God "*will send Jesus Christ whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.*"

Oh! the blindness of mankind! To have forgotten the purport of the prayer of our Lord, which we or our fathers have offered up for ages, "that his kingdom might come, that his will might be done on earth even as it is in heaven, and yet are they, through the false teachings of the priests, looking for a heaven beyond the bounds of time and space, of which they know nothing, but mayhap suppose that in their refined and etherialized condition they shall loll in luxurious ease on lazy clouds through the slowly revolving periods of eternal ages.

"Where is heaven? beyond all space,  
The distance mind can never trace."

Is it, indeed, so? Then if men arrive there, it must be "out of their minds," which must make it one vast lunatic asylum, of whose enjoyments we wish not to partake.

But, brethren, you have not so learned Christ, as to cry peace and safety, when sudden destruction is nigh at hand. "And ye are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief, ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness; therefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober." 1st Thess. 5th chap.

But, lastly, we are informed by the epistle of Jude that there should come "mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the spirit." I shall here take the liberty of giving another translation of the foregoing, taken from an old Bible of 1606. "How that they told you that there should be mockers in the last time, which should walke after their owne ungodly lusts. These are makers of sects, fleshly, having not the spirit."

But now to the subject,—are the Latter-day Saints makers of sects? no; we claim no affinity with any, we own no relationship; we will not condescend to acknowledge ourselves as emanating from the most refined of all the many-times-reformed systems of the day; but that our principles, our ordinances, and our whole organization, have been taught and established by direct revelation from God himself, by his own voice, by the ministration of angels, or by the revelations of his spirit. Yes, on this rock we stand, and thousands that shall read this who have received of the witness of the spirit for themselves, shall feel it bear testimony as they read that this is true.

But let me call attention for a moment to the fourth chapter of Ephesians, and we find a description of the church of Christ, in which a priesthood ordained of God, and receiving their varied authorities as gifts from Him, administered the ordinances of his kingdom, through which blessings flowed to all that became subject to the laws of it.

And, moreover, we find clearly and definitely stated the objects for which these offices and gifts were imparted.—"For the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ." And that they were necessary for us, to enable us to come by

one faith, and by a like knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, till we individually attained to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, that we might be prepared for the period when that which is perfect shall come and be like him, when we see him as he is. Yea, like him, having received grace for grace, until attaining a fulness, we be prepared, as we have said before, to be one with the Father and with the Son, as they are one. But again we ask, what would have been the result of being in possession of this priesthood, and these gifts? Let the apostle answer, the churches would have been no more children, tossed to and fro' with every wind of doctrine," and necessarily so, for let men individually receive of that spirit which leadeth into all truth, which brings all things to remembrance, and sheweth things to come; and how utterly impossible for there to be diversity of doctrine. Yet what is the condition of the churches of modern christendom? One Bible, one book of heavenly laws, yet hundreds of sects, professing to be guided by one spirit, yet clashing and opposed to each other; and yet when uniting to array themselves against the work of the Lord, complimenting each other as so many different divisions in the host of God:—but enough. "Folly, thy name is sectarianism." And a "house divided against itself must fall."

Thus have we passed through a hasty examination of the various references made to the false teachers of the last days. Let me then by way of conclusion congratulate the Saints of the Most High God on the results of such an investigation, and let them take courage, lift up their heads and rejoice, for their redemption draweth nigh, and though the struggle may be severe, yet the triumph is certain, and ere long they shall stand associated with that glorious company which the apostle beheld standing on the sea of glass, having the harps of God, and unite with them in singing "the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy, for all nations shall come and worship before thee, for thy judgments are made manifest. Even so, Amen.

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